

Is Our Spur Program Identifying Excellence?

by ANCOC Class 98-01D

The "Cavalry Spur Programs," administered by many cavalry units to recognize excellence, have in many cases lost their focus, according to 11 sergeants first class in 1st Platoon of ANCOC Class 98-01. They have suggested guidelines for tightening qualifications and standardizing the programs. -Ed.

The cavalry spur program has always been used to recognize those soldiers who have displayed excellence amongst their peers. As a group, after reflecting on the various unit spur programs we have seen or been a part of, ANCOC Class 98-01D, 1st Platoon, has identified a concern that many programs have become misguided. The spur program should be administered and conducted in such a manner as to increase CMF 19 *esprit de corps* and protect the integrity of the program.

Other CMFs have their own methods for recognizing soldiers of distinction, such as the Expert Infantry Badge or the Expert Field Medical Badge. The cavalry spur program is ours, and as unit commanders and senior NCOs, we control the direction in which it develops. As 11 sergeants first class, from 11 separate cavalry assignments, we have generated a guide that we believe will offer units the tools to create and manage a program that will continue to uphold the spirit of the spur.

These are the basic requirements which we believe will continue to maintain the "Order Of The Spur" as a distinctive program for the United States Cavalry.

- **The Order of the Spur should be reserved for CMF 19 soldiers only.** The programs are a traditional concept derived from the horse cavalry. Soldiers in CMF 19 are the only ones who continue to perform the original horse cavalry missions.

- **Holders of the Order of the Spur should be at the rank of corporal or above.** The spur represents skill and experience as a cavalry trooper in the performance of leadership roles during reconnaissance and other cavalry missions. Earning the right to wear spurs should require years of development, not simply passing a spur ride, therefore it should be reserved for NCOs and officers.

- **The only units that should maintain a Spur Program are MTOE scout**

platoons and MTOE or TDA cavalry organizations. The spur is a symbol originating from the horse cavalry, thus the program should remain only with those units still participating in or existing as the cavalry.

- **Spur candidates should be required to have completed either a real-world deployment or a training center rotation to the NTC, JRTC, or CMTC.** Regardless of test scores or garrison performance, an individual must display superior skill and experience in the actual performance of cavalry and reconnaissance missions as a part of a significant and challenging unit mission.

- **Candidates must meet the prerequisites of the Excellence in Armor Program.** Enrollment in EIA should not be required; however, those prerequisites demonstrate the same superior skill and knowledge that the Spur Program should be establishing as a standard.

- **A Spur Program candidate must be nominated by another spur holder who is senior in that individual's chain of command.** To uphold the integrity of the program, only spur holders should retain the authority to nominate. The candidate should work directly for that spur holder to prevent individuals from taking care of a buddy.

After all of the above requirements have been met, the candidates should have to prove themselves by participating in a spur ride. The spur ride itself should be both physically and mentally demanding. It should include a road march and land navigation. The tasks selected for the ride should be battle-focused and oriented to the unit's real world mission. The entire ride, and each separate task during the ride, should be oriented toward reconnaissance and other traditional cavalry skills.

The Order of the Spur must continue to be a program looked upon as a symbol of excellence. Each unit must be able to develop a program that is distinctively its own. The integrity of the spur is in question. Commanders and unit spur holders need to look at their programs across the Army. Wearing spurs is a cavalry tradition, and it must be respected and honored. Let all Cavalry Troopers help to ensure that we have the Order Of The Spur, not the Broken Spur Award.